

EXHIBIT A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY

FILE: NARRATIVE EXHIBITS

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

a. Implementation Team

Lead Applicant is the Rockford Housing Authority (RHA). The Winnebago County Housing Authority (WCHA) is a co-applicant. RHA and WCHA both have significant experience in leading transformation and collective impact efforts similar in scope and complexity. WCHA led a recent HOPE VI project in the western portion of the target neighborhood, while RHA is completing development of a Choice Neighborhoods Transformation plan for Ellis Heights, which comprises the eastern half of the Westside Connections target neighborhood. Other key members of the implementation team include: Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (Neighborhood Implementation Entity), Gorman & Company, Inc. (Housing Implementation Entity), Bridge Rockford Alliance, Inc. (People Implementation Entity), and Rockford Public School District 205 (Education Implementation Entity). Many other local partners have been actively engaged in developing and implementing a variety of pilot projects that will help move us forward. The strategies of our Plan are directed toward overcoming impediments to our desired outcomes in a sustainable way. Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant funds will support substantial progress in achieving long-standing improvement goals for the neighborhood that have been reinforced by the Ellis Heights Choice Neighborhoods Plan and the Westside Connections Transformation Plan initiative.

b. Neighborhood Planning Area Boundaries

The Westside Connection Neighborhood boundaries were drawn to allow significant challenges to be addressed in a comprehensive way and ignite potential economic engines that will create jobs and bring commercial services to neighborhood residents that have been lacking for decades. It is also known locally as the western leg of Rockford's Bloody "L" due to the

violence and criminal activity that has long plagued the neighborhood. The eastern half of the target neighborhood was the focus of the Ellis Heights Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant (FY2011). The neighborhood was expanded and additional planning meetings were held at the request of neighborhood residents and our planning partners who recognized the common needs and opportunities to positively impact the entire Westside Connections Neighborhood.

The target housing project that is the focus of this grant application is the Fairgrounds Valley Apartments, a 210-unit public housing complex owned and managed by RHA and is located in the northeast corner of the neighborhood. Fairgrounds Valley is also the target housing for the Ellis Heights Choice Neighborhoods Plan. A second low-income housing complex is the 216-unit Concord Commons complex located in the southwest corner of the neighborhood. Both developments isolate low-income residents and turn their backs on the surrounding low density residential neighborhood that surrounds them.

c. Requested Funding

The funding request for this Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant application is \$28,050,000.00. One hundred sixty two tenant protection vouchers are requested based on the results of the Fairgrounds Valley resident needs assessment completed in August 2013. As a FY2011 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grantee, we understand that an Implementation Grant award may be reduced by the \$300,000 planning grant award.

d. Transformation Plan Overview

Our Westside Connections ***Neighborhood Strategy*** focuses on several strategic investments to support projects that will 1) leverage investments being made by other entities to maximize the impact of Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant funds, 2) create a Critical Improvement Revolving Loan Fund to maximize long-term neighborhood benefit, 3) transfer tax

delinquent buildings and vacant land into a land bank or community land trust, and 4) stabilize the neighborhood by addressing housing conditions and public safety issues.

The target housing site is the Fairgrounds Valley Apartments. Our ***Housing Strategy*** involves replacing this 210-unit development with 160 units of mixed-income housing (107 replacement units). An additional 110 units, including 103 replacement units will be located in non-R/ECAP census tracts to help de-concentrate poverty, reduce racial segregation and overcome impediments to fair housing choice. RHA is applying to convert all of the Fairgrounds Valley replacement units to RAD.

Our ***People Strategy*** addresses needs identified in the recently completed Fairgrounds Valley resident needs assessment survey and the core goals and outcomes of the Choice Neighborhoods program in the areas of health, economic self-sufficiency, and education. While the activities described in our application specifically address Fairgrounds Valley residents, our Westside Connections Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Plan also includes a number of projects and programs designed to improve the quality of life for all Westside residents.

The Westside Connections Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Plan builds on the collective efforts to rebuild the Rockford region, which has struggled for more than two decades in the face of a changing economy. Several community and regional initiatives are underway to improve education and better position the region to compete in the global economy. A Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant will help continue the momentum and further the organizational collaboration that has already begun to make inroads into transforming the target neighborhood into one of opportunity and hope, rather than one of disinvestment and despair.